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ABSTRACT

This paper describes a successful facilitator training model, developed as part of an Adult Basic/Continuing Education (AB/CE) staff development program in Minnesota. The following topics are included: (1) the new basics and what is taught in the Minnesota AB/CE programs; (2) how these new basics are taught, emphasizing Malcolm Knowles' model of adult education; (3) the role of students and teachers/facilitators in setting the classroom climate for learning; (4) how facilitators train others; and (5) the process of training the facilitators. An 11-item bibliography for Minnesota AB/CE staff development and a diagram of the state department plan for AB/CE staff development are included. (JW)

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TRAINING NETWORKS: HOW TO ESTABLISH CONNECTIONS STATEWIDE AND INCREASE EXPERTISE AND SERVICE EXPONENTIALLY

Introduction: I would like to welcome you this afternoon and introduce myself. I am Mary Hurly and this is Karen Ray. I am the lead teacher from the Westonka Project and a Training Facilitator. Karen is a private consultant and the manager of MIIN. Our purpose this afternoon is to share with you a successful training model. This model is part of a staff development program that began in Minnesota five years ago. This model has been tremendously effective in increasing the number of clients served, expanding the geographic service area, and providing the kind of programs that the clients really need.

Our association with the staff development program goes back to its beginning when Robert Gramstad, who was then the State Director of Adult Basic Education, proposed a long range staff development plan for Minnesota. Our involvement has grown as the plan unfolded and became a reality. We brought some slides along to give you some idea what our training sessions are like. We also have slides of some classroom activities. The first group is the training session held with Malcolm Knowls last spring. Some of the topics we touched on were learning contracts, androgony, and group process. The second group shows a Training Facilitator meeting at Itasca State Park this fall. At this particular meeting we came to a consensus on what kind of committment a Training Facilitator will make and we also formed work groups for carrying out training activities. The third group shows classroom scenes. Besides academic needs the students are involved in learning coping and adaptive skills in group activities.

In addition to providing you with some helpful information in this workshop about this training program, we want to model the process oriented, adult education mode that we have developed and used, which is based upon the work of Malcolm Knowls and the applied behavioral sciences. Therefore, we are now including a time to build an agenda together so that we can clarrify your wants and needs and meet them as best we can (time for brainstorming - what do you want out of this session). Our agenda includes the following:

- A discussion of the New Basics
- What we want students to do
- The classroom delivery system
- Training Facilitator training
- Training Facilitator local in-services.

We also intend to inlcude time for networking and problems solving.

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THE NEW BASICS

What We Teach

The Minnesota State Plan for Adult Basic and Continuing Education outlines the content of our Adult Basic and Continuing Education programs, as well as the process by which that teaching may most effectively take place. The State Plan is highly responsive to the changing needs of adult students in today's society, and therefore emphasizes the old basics of reading, writing and arithmetic in terms of the highly technical "information" society of the 1980s and 90s. The State Plan pays particular attention to the employment issues of its adult learners.

> "American schools are in trouble. Large numbers of students are leaving school ill prepared for jobs and effective citizenship."
> —John Goodlad

> "New hirees must be able to handle more comprehensive tasks, based on such basic skills as reading, writing, and listening, than on such vocational skills as typing ... What one executive has called the put-place-take-put-jobs, purposely engineered to be viable regardless of worker educational levels, are rapidly being replaced by technology."
> —Basic Skills in the U.S. Work Force

> "Retraining people occupationally to meet the needs of the information society will be a high priority. 'High touch' work will be just as important as 'high tech' work. The human interpersonal aspect of our lives will not significantly diminish, only be adjusted to the new technology. The basics of an information society are grammatical and mathematical literacy. In order to operate computers, communicate, or function in the information society, basic literacy and math skills are required. The liberal arts will return. People will increasingly change jobs, the skills demanded of them will be constantly shifting, and some skills will become obsolete, thus forcing people to learn other skills."
> —J. Nesbitt

These quotations from popular authors and recent texts highlight the "New Basics" we must be teaching students in order to be helpful to them. These New Basics include:

- Life long learning skills - the capacity for an adult to understand how to design and implement a learning program for oneself
- Decision making - the ability to collect data from many sources, sort through alternatives, and problem-solve will become necessary skills for many jobs, even the most manual labors.
- Using community resources - the ability for adult students to learn how to use the resources of the community available to them is necessary for survival. These resources, including hospitals, government, and libraries mean the ability to buy food, vote, and carry out the basic responsibilities and privledges of American citizenship
- Interpersonal effectiveness - as Nesbitt has highlighted, the ability to communicate with one's peer will become more and more important. Recent statistics by employers show that one of the most common reasons employees are fired or layed off has to do with their inability to talk to their supervisor, or settle arguments with their peers. Communication skills, including the ability to manage conflict, will become increasingly important in an individual's ability to become employed and stay employed.

As you may recognize, some of these skills use to be called the coping and adaptive skills. By labeling them in this way, we relegate them to secondary importance next to the old guardians: the three R's. Instead, the New Basics include four areas in which all students need to be prepared:

- Employability (the ability to get, keep, and enjoy a job).
- Generativity (as Eric Erickson describes it, the skills needed to be a productive and generative member of American society).
- Coping Skills (skills needed to cope with change).
- Academics (the basic literacy skills such as reading, writing, listening, speaking, and calculating).

How We Teach

How we teach these New Basics is as important as what we teach. The Minnesota Staff Development plan emphasizes use of the Malcolm Knowls model of adult education. This model describes teachers as facilitators of learning, rather than experts speaking down to ignorant students. The model allows for stages of adult development, and requires the process of teaching to answer to the experience of the adult student, and to the needs of the student for relevance and applicability of what she/he is learning. The responsibility for deciding what to learn and how to learn is seen as a shared activity between the facilitator and the student. Community generated, experience-based materials are used to supplement the curriculum. For instance, the use of newspapers, employment forms, forms for receiving food stamps, training manuals for local businesses, and instructions and warranties for appliances are curriculum materials which can be used to teach employability and coping skills as well as academics. Classrooms that follow the adult education model include feedback loops from the adult students to the teachers, so that constant evaluation of classroom activities can be used to better the delivery of learning services. Finally, group process is used to help students learn from their peers.

THE NEW BASICS - THE NEW CLASSROOM

Some very knowledgeable person once defined an AB/CE teacher as the manager of a learning environment. This definition not only specifies the role of the teacher, but implies the role of the students. Granted, the teacher has a leadership role, but the word "environment" suggests that the students will have the responsibility to pursue their own goals within this setting. The dynamics of the student teacher and student-student relationship is crucial in an AB/CE classroom. The classroom teacher/facilitator begins with setting the climate for learning. In order for something meaningful to occur, a sense of trust and commonality must be established. The next task is a needs assessment and this activity leads to a learning contract. This is done on an individual and group basis. The scope of AB/CE learning is very broad. Students may be involved in a variety of learning projects which might include communications skills, parenting, job seeking or keeping, writing to name a few. These learning activities take place within the context of a group activity. That means that students have the opportunity to practice their communication skills to develop their capacity for participation and leadership and to learn to problem solve in a labratory situation. These are very transferable skills. Also, the group process becomes a vehicle for establishing a support network among the students. The challenge of the teacher/facilitator is to help the students discover their needs, even those needs that are not expressed, and design an environment where the students see each other as a resource and a support. We all know that AB/CE students are a heterogeneous group, and in that fact lies the challenge of the AB/CE professional who is committed to using group process while meeting individual needs.

TRAINING FACILITATORS TRAIN OTHERS

The final outcome of the intensive training which is sponsored by the State Department of Education is to have the Training Facilitators train others. This is part of the committment they make when they join the group. This, in fact, has been happening in Minnesota. Prior to 1981, regional in-services were conducted by the State Department of Education. In 1981, Training Facilitators joined together and planned staff development activities for other teachers. These training events cut across county lines and in some cases drew AB/CE professionals from as far as 100 miles. These in-services drew as many as 100 and as few as 20 depending on the geographical location. But in virtually every case the in-services were successful. The most critical need the teachers had was to get together with other professionals. This was evidenced by the response to the needs assessments that went out to teachers prior to the in-services. The Training Facilitators planned these events with that need in mind and allowed plenty of time for the participants to share resources and discuss concerns. In addition to the regional in-services there were local in-services which Training Facilitators conducted on a regular basis. Local in-services are the best opportunity for frequent exposure to a Training Facilitator who models the process oriented adult education mode. Modeling, is in fact, an important teaching technique in the classroom as well. Local in-services are also an opportunity for the more experienced teachers to serves as mentors to the others. New teachers need to feel they have resources to call upon, especially someone with expertise who can anwer their questions. Another way Training Facilitators train teachers is through task groups that design training materials. One project will produce a video of AB/CE classroom activities so that new teachers in particular can see a process oriented adult education. Other facilitators are writing Level A training packages. These materials will be used with new teachers before they begin classroom teaching. Facilitators are also developing more advanced training materials that deal with

communication skills, problem solving, and decision making activities. Over the past three years, Training Facilitators have in-serviced hundreds of AB/CE teachers locally and regionally. By training others they brought process oriented adult education to a classroom. This was the orignal intention of a plan for staff development which began in 1979. Thus, that which was an idea for a new approach to adult education is now operational across the state and the Training Facilitators who are essential in bringing this about.

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TRAINING THE TRAINING FACILITATORS

Basically, the training of the Training Facilitators is carried on in two day sessions which occur approximately every other month. Each year, the staff development activities are culminated in August with an experiential, laboratory learning session of one week in length. This session is attended by as many teachers as possible, including the Training Facilitators. The largest activity was held at a resort in northern Minnesota in August 1983, when 175 teachers spent the week together.

During the two day training sessions of the Training Facilitators, the most important element is modeling. Training Facilitators are able to experience a two day classroom setting which models the Malcolm Knowls adult education concepts. For instance, although there is a set agenda for the two day training session, when Training Facilitators arrive at the meeting their needs are examined, and the agenda is adjusted in order to meet those needs. At the end of every two day session, evaluations are completed which are carefully incorporated into the design of the following month's training session.

The common areas for training during these two day sessions are:

- Group process - the Training Facilitators are able to experienytially discover the concepts of group facilitation, group leadership, and group development.
- Process/content - Training Facilitators become clearly aware of the difference between content of teaching and process of teaching by the constant reflection upon the process of the group during the two day session. In addition, process itself is taught.
- The development of personal skills - individual Training Facilitators are encouraged to develop their own skill levels to encourage leadership, better teaching, and interpersonal effectiveness.
- Information sharing - Training Facilitators come to sessions prepared to take over leadership of the group and teach some particular area, (such as neurolingquistics, or communication skills). In this way, not only is peer learning modeled, but the information and skills of each individual facilitator is shared for the benefit of the group. In addition, there is also an important information update by the State Department of Education, which models openess and honesty in its communication with the Training Facilitators concerning State Department activities and initiatives.

The Training Facilitators system is still young in March, 1984 the Minnesota Interaction Influence Network will host the fourth orientation for new Training Facilitators. During this orientation, new Training Facilitators are added to the group. In 1979, this staff development plan was created, and the first State Plan reflecting these concepts and changes was written. In June, 1980, the kickoff for this training system was held at a resort in northern Minnesota, where 100 teachers participated in the first summer intensive training event. This week long event had monumental effects on many teachers, and four years later the State Department and the Network are continuing to hear about changes that happened to people at that first event. The following March (March, 1981) the Network hosted the first orientation for Training Facilitators. Twenty-three teachers and administrators who had attended the week long event the summer before spent one week at a residential training facility. This training activity was hosted by an out of state consultant who had been a member of the staff during the week long training event. During the following year, about six training events were held locally hosted by the Training Facilitators. In August of 1981, the staff returned that had made the week long

summer event of 1980 so successful. During a second summer intensive training week, the 23 Training Facilitators carefully observed this consulting staff at work. The Training Facilitators were in the role of students at this time.

The following spring, March, 1982, the second annual orientation drew an additional 22 teachers and administrators. The Training Facilitators now numbered 45, and hosted ten events locally. During this year, we trained as many teachers as the State Department of Education had trained in previous years, with approximately three quarters of the budget. In August, 1982, the third annual summer intensive training event was held at St. John's University. Approximately 100 teachers attended this event, which was designed in large part by the Training Facilitators. The following March (1983) the Training Facilitators numbers grew to 62 when the third orientation for Training Facilitators was held at a conference center in the Metropolitan area. This training event was managed solely by talent from within the Training Facilitators, the Network and the State Department of Education. According to the State Plan, reliance on outside consultants was terminated as staff in the state became sophisticated enough to manage their own training. In August, 1983, the Training Facilitators proved how well they had learned their skills when they managed a week long summer intensive training event at a resort. One hundred and seventy-five teachers and administrators rated the week as one of the finest training experiences they had ever had; Training Facilitators designed, facilitated, and implemented all of the training during that week.

In 1984, the Training Facilitators will be undergoing big changes. They will be asked to make some formal committments to the group (in years past, Training Facilitators were asked only to commit to the next event.) In addition, their skills in codependence will be developed as the group takes on more and more of its own leadership and management, and relies on the State Department less and less. Finally, the Training Facilitators are developing systems to make themselves more accountable to one another, and to the teachers they train. This accountability will have to do with the quality and quantity of work expected and provided by each Training Facilitator. A monitoring system will be established to insure that local teachers are receiving the best possible training.

These changes are a challenge to the group, and we expect to work through them slowly and carefully. This, however, is nothing new, since the entire development of the group has been a slow, step by step process.

During the programming year of 1982-83 the Training Facilitators reached twice as many teachers as the State Department had in any previous year, and did it for half the cost. This is a sign of the success that this group has had, and the State Department, the Network, and the Training Facilitators anticipate that careful step-by-step changes will insure continued success in the future.

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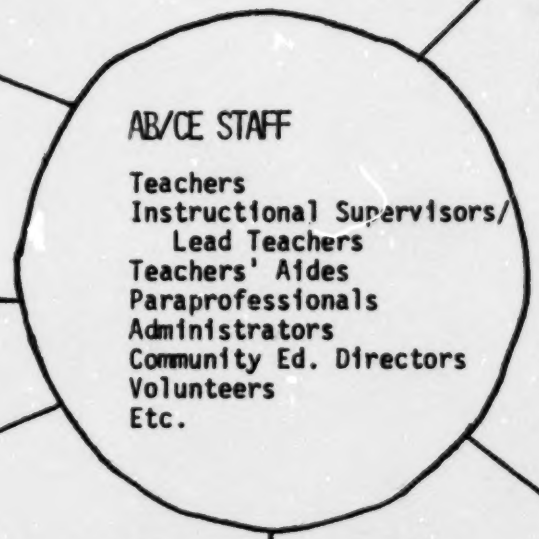
STATE DEPT PLAN FOR ABCE STAFF DEVELOPMENT



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